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Economic sector/major group: transport

Statement submitted by the International Federation on Ageing, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996. This statement has been endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations: American Association of Retired Persons, All India Women's Association, Armenian International Women's Association, Communication Coordinating Committee, Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants, Global Action on Aging, International Council of Jewish Women, International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres, International Humanist and Ethical Union, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Pan-African Movement, Service Peace and Justice in Latin America, The Links, Inc., and World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women.

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Transportation: impact on older persons

Access to transportation: promoting the independence of older persons

Although older persons received recognition during the several world summits, on population, on social concerns, on women and on the city, they were overlooked in section III of Agenda 21.

The contributions of older persons to a sustainable future as a "major group" must be considered a priority. The growth of the global older population is one of the most challenging demographic trends of the twenty-first century. These are the persons who are living longer, more productive lives. A steady stream of 1 million persons a month now cross the threshold to aged 60 years or over; 80 per cent of these are in the South. The total number of those aged 60 years or over is projected to reach 600 million by the year 2001 and to go on to reach 1.97 billion by the year 2050. This snapshot serves as a small illustration of a far-reaching, if quiet, demographic revolution now affecting the social and economic structures of societies.

By its resolution 46/91 of 16 December 1991, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Principles for Older Persons with five major themes: independence, participation, self-fulfilment, dignity and care. Transportation is a key element in achieving each one of these goals. It being recognized that older persons are a diverse population, transportation is a critical element in moving older persons into a positive and productive life in both rural and urban areas. To sustain independence, older persons must have access to means of transportation permitting them to participate in the community; engage in income-generating activities; reach educational opportunities, as well as health-care providers; obtain food, water and other resources; and support self-help activities of all kinds. Additionally, adequate transportation facilitates the older person's ability to find safe and adaptable living environments.

We urge Governments to take action, with the support of non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to:

- Ensure adequate transportation for older persons so that they can reach employment possibilities that will help them to secure income and be economically self-sustaining;
- Ensure transportation for older persons living in poor neighbourhoods (slums), so that they can maintain contact with their facilities such as markets, and social, religious and recreational facilities;
- Provide transportation, including emergency transportation, so that older persons in both rural and urban settings can have access to the health facilities they need;
- Ensure that buses or other means of public transport are accessible to disabled persons of all ages;
- Provide bus, truck, bicycles or other transportation for older rural farmers so that they can bring their produce to local markets to secure income and be economically self-sustaining;
- Provide transportation of any kind — mechanical or animal — to relieve the physically demanding burden placed on women of all ages to obtain water for family use. This time-consuming task has a major effect on older women in rural areas, causing additional physical deterioration;
- Provide wheelchairs to allow older disabled persons to enjoy a sense of well-being when visiting recreational and cultural facilities;
- Provide appropriate transportation to accommodate the increasing number of older tourists globally.